



# Needs Assessment Committee

## **Meeting Minutes**

**Thursday, December 9, 2004**

**160 N. Main Street, Mayor's Large Conference Room, 8<sup>th</sup> Floor**

Executive Committee  
Scott Fleming, Chairman  
Nick Clark, Vice-Chairman  
Cato Johnson, Vice-Chairman  
Nisha Powers, Secretary

Committee Members  
David Lillard, Commissioner  
Deidre Malone, Commissioner  
Dr. Thomas Glass  
Audrey Howard  
David Pickler  
Patrice Robinson  
Jay Weatherington

Shelby County Government  
A C Wharton, Jr., Mayor

### **Committee members present:**

Scott Fleming, Chairman  
Cato Johnson, Vice-Chairman  
Commissioner Deidre Malone  
Dr. Thomas Glass  
David Pickler  
Jay Weatherington

Nick Clark, Vice-Chairman  
Nisha Powers, Secretary  
Commissioner David Lillard  
Audrey Howard  
Patrice Robinson

**NAC Advisor:** Dr. Richard Rhoda

### **School personnel present:**

Dr. Bobby Webb, Superintendent, SCS  
Dr. Richard Holden, Assistant Superintendent, SCS  
Mrs. Maura Sullivan, Director of Research and Planning, SCS  
Dr. Carol Johnson, Superintendent, MCS  
Lavon Alston, Chief Operations Officer, MCS  
Lynn Crain, Director of Operations, MCS  
Victor J. Carr, Jr., Director of Student Information, MCS  
Mike Frye, Director of Facilities, MCS  
Tom Marshall, MCS Consultant  
Jimmie Tucker, MCS Consultant

### **Shelby County Administration and staff:**

A C Wharton, Mayor, Shelby County Government  
John Fowlkes, CAO  
Roscoe Dixon, Assistant CAO  
Kevin Gallagher, Mayor's Office, Public Affairs  
Richard S. Copeland, Director, Memphis and Shelby County DPD  
Grace Hutchinson, Deputy Director, Finance and Administration  
Wanda Martin, Deputy Director, Memphis and Shelby County DPD  
Marion Jones, Senior Planner, Memphis and Shelby County DPD

### **Visitors present:**

Dr. Susan Roakes, U of M, Department of City and Regional Planning  
Jodi Groover, Fleming Architects, Inc.  
Lora Nath, The Commercial Appeal  
Michael Erskin, The Commercial Appeal

Chairman Fleming called the meeting to order at 1:55 P.M.

**I. Approval of Minutes:**

Chairman Fleming asked if there were minutes of the last meeting. Pending review of the meeting minutes, approval of the minutes was deferred to the next meeting.

**II. Old Business:**

None.

**III. New Business:**

Chairman Fleming stated the purpose of the meeting is to hear presentations from Memphis City Schools (MCS) and Shelby County Schools (SCS) for capital requests. Chairman Fleming thanked Dr. Johnson, Dr. Webb and their staffs for assembling the information and stated it provided the NAC with a better understanding of their capital requests.

**IV. Introduction of Dr. Richard Rhoda:**

- A. Chairman Fleming introduced Dr. Rhoda and thanked him for assisting the committee. The Chairman explained that Dr. Rhoda would review the requests using NAC guidelines adopted at the last meeting and rank the requests for NAC; however, NAC would make its own recommendations using Dr. Rhoda's expertise.
- B. Dr. Rhoda stated he is the Executive Director of Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC). THEC is a coordinating body. Dr. Rhoda has been employed by the THEC for 7 years. All of Dr. Rhoda's experience is within the State of Tennessee. Prior to working with the Board of Regents, Dr. Rhoda worked at various campuses within the Board of Regents system.

**V. Presentations:**

- A. The SCS system's presentation was made by Dr. Richard Holden and Mrs. Maura Sullivan. Please refer to the attached copy of the PowerPoint presentation.

NAC Questions and Requests for Additional Information included:

- 1. Vice-Chairman Nick Clark asked if what was submitted was covered under the 655 Agreement and asked how the 655 Agreement came about. Dr. Holden responded most of the costs are covered under the 655 Agreement which is in effect for another year, but SCS is short funds on several new facilities due to rising costs. The 655 Agreement was a joint effort undertaken as a result of the Educational Improvement Act of 1992. Dollars were based on the number of students.

Mayor Wharton entered the conference room. Chairman Fleming recognized Mayor Wharton who thanked the committee for its work and its open and inclusive process.

2. Some discussion occurred between Mr. Clark and Dr. Holden regarding the cost per square foot with respect to the roof replacement costs for Chimneyrock Elementary School. Dr. Holden stated insulation material was in short supply causing prices to fluctuate based on supply and demand principles. The costs include design fees and include removing old roof to the decking to inspect wood. Due diligence by the school system includes regular inspections by the maintenance staff or building engineer. The costs are based on a report prepared by Mr. Manley, a consultant. Mr. Clark stated saturation could increase damage and replacement costs.
  3. In the discussion of portable classrooms currently used for schools located in Southeast Shelby County, the following issues were raised:
    - Chairman Fleming inquired about the current cost of portable classrooms. Dr. Holden responded SCS has been fortunate to not purchase portable classrooms for the last three years. It cost approximately \$35,000 to move a portable classroom and another \$20,000 for set up. Each portable classroom serves as one additional classroom.
    - Mr. Clark asked about the life span of portable classrooms and the cost per square foot. Dr. Holden stated some portables may last as long as 20 years if they are not moved frequently. If a portable classroom is moved frequently its life cycle may range from 10 to 15 years.
    - Dr. Glass noted portable classrooms also increase the wear and tear on permanent buildings due to overcrowding. The permanent buildings may deteriorate faster, and it may cost more in terms of maintenance and impact on the building's life cycle.
    - Mr. Clark also requested information on the life cycle costs and capitalization of maintenance costs for portable classrooms.
  4. During the presentation of the 18-room addition at Houston High School, Mr. Clark asked about the collateral impact on future growth rates and the allocation of students after the construction. Dr. Glass anticipated the growth would free capacity in MCS. Reports show new students and where they come from. Dr. Johnson stated the influx of non-English speaking immigrants makes the growth rate and growth patterns difficult to estimate.
- B. MCS presentation was made by Lavon Alston. Please refer to the attached copy of the PowerPoint presentation.

NAC Questions and Requests for Additional Information included:

1. A question arose regarding American with Disabilities Act (ADA) improvements and what the consequences there would be if MCS was found to be in non-compliance. Lynn Crain responded that ADA requirements are a part of the Civil Rights Compliance Law. If MCS is found to be in non-compliance, Federal monies for lunch programs, special education and career and technical centers would be frozen. Mr. Clark requested a letter be produced detailing the consequences and submitted to the NAC.
2. Mr. Howard asked if there was adequate maintenance for new schools. MCS is not able to invest in maintenance.
3. Vice-Chairman Cato Johnson asked Mr. Alston to break down the 150 schools with life safety issues. There are approximately 40-46 high schools, 20 elementary schools and 69 middle schools.
4. Commissioner David Lillard asked if the work would be done on a competitive bid basis. Tom Marshall confirmed that it would, depending on how many projects were funded and the availability of the contractors to do the work. Projects may be packaged or bid individually.
5. Mr. Clark asked if deferred maintenance caused migration to Shelby County Schools. Dr. Carol Johnson cited the example of the Mitchell High School renovation that resulted in more students within MCS transferring within the system to Mitchell based on a value added perception associated with the renovation.
6. Dr. Glass stated that many school districts automatically provide allowances for Priority I (threats to life and safety) types of repairs. Dr. Glass asked if there was adequate capacity to make these repairs within a 12 month period. Lavon Alston said the project would be bid and reviewed closely.
7. Mr. Clark asked when the last system-wide renovation program occurred. Mike Frye responded in the 1990's when many City Schools were upgraded to provide air conditioning, some minor repairs were performed in 20-25 schools as a part of the 655 Replacement Schools. Patrice Robinson stated the average school age is 43 years out of a 50 year life cycle.
8. Commissioner David Lillard stated after a short period of time, a school becomes obsolete due to educational programming. Dr. Johnson agreed, but asked how to program more useful space than currently exists. Commissioner Lillard said the problem was three-fold in terms of a long-term site/educational programming, number of students and debt limit.

Shelby County currently has \$1.9 billion in bond debt and is on a credit watch with agencies.

9. Mr. Clark commented on the spreadsheet of Priorities I-III in the context of a capitalization costs for providing school space in a renovated schools versus the cost of new construction. Mr. Clark was concerned about the cost of maintenance and repairs, ADA modifications and the student population. MCS officials stated renovation of an existing building is 60-75%+ as compared to building new facilities with better amenities that meet current educational needs.
10. Mr. Clark felt a 10 year student population projection was needed. Mr. Marshall agreed and said these studies are underway.

Dr. Rhoda had to leave to return to Nashville. Chairman Fleming thanked Dr. Rhoda for attending the meeting and listening to the presentations.

11. Mr. Clark asked if there was no support for rooftop units in the context of environmental conditions and mechanical systems. Chairman Fleming stated there were considerable differences in cost between City and County Schools.
12. Mr. Alston stated the highest costs occur in the demolition of structures. Florida and Douglass Schools were discussed. These proposed demolitions are in depressed areas where the schools cannot be sold, where the schools must be secured to keep people out, and the grass must be mowed. Mr. Howard asked if MCS had attempted to sell the properties without demolition. Mr. Johnson suggested this option should be pursued during this process. Mr. Marshall said MCS would sell the Melrose High School to anyone interested for \$1. No one has stepped forward in the last two years to buy the building. Mr. Marshall stated many of these building have environmental problems that are expensive to correct and/or demolish. Mr. Clark asked if these locations could be turned over to the Division of Housing and Community Development (HCD) for redevelopment of housing programs that would create a tax base to benefit the City and County.
13. A discussion regarding merging of schools occurred. Dr. Johnson stated this is an option she and her staff are reviewing. There are 12-15 schools that are currently underutilized within 1 mile of each other. Dr. Johnson's staff is determining the most viable facility in terms of condition and which facility is in the most viable location in terms of transit, education programming and public support. Dr. Johnson wants to revisit the housing data and hold a public process to see what the public will accept. Dr. Johnson wants to present a plan to the Memphis Board of Education by Spring 2005. Dr. Johnson estimates implementation is 2 years away. If some schools are closed, then charter schools may reopen. Charter school students are still MCS students. Caldwell Elementary houses both a MCS

and a charter school. Mr. Marshall stated MCS is already looking at these options in anticipation of NAC questions.

14. Commissioner Lillard stated both school systems are on the verge of severe difficulties and are in crisis but for different reasons. The time frame to solve these problems must be accelerated. The school crisis is decreasing the community's quality of life. Mayor Wharton has already announced he will not support a tax increase for next year.
15. Mr. Clark asked if some of the \$2.2 million cost could be funded out of the rainy day fund so that cost savings could occur sooner. Dr. Johnson stated she would still have to move furniture and people to a new facility. This entails parental notification that must occur no later than March for the next school year. Commissioner Lillard stated he would personally be willing to entertain such a proposal, but that \$2.2 million would be a tall order. Commissioner Lillard said the next budget cycle is tight and the County is limited in its risk taking ability.

#### C. Projects

1. The MCS and SCS will interface regarding school facilities in the general South Cordova Area. This is necessary to avoid overlapping needs and monitor the significant development activity in the area. Commissioner Lillard asked if a larger middle school would be better than two separate schools. Dr. Webb responded by saying as a school becomes larger, it become more unmanageable.
2. Renovation of Treadwell High School: There are a total of approximately 2,200 students in the Treadwell Elementary, High School and Career and Vocational Center. The students are saturated in an environment with shared facilities such as the cafeteria and auditorium. This creates a certain dysfunctional situation. There was a discussion among NAC members regarding if the reinvestment into this facility would correct the dysfunctional nature or if another site should be pursued to separate the three schools. Commissioner Lillard asked why put a child in a school that is dysfunctional and will cost a lot to maintain? Dr. Johnson stated the improvements would alleviate some of the dysfunction. She also stated you must consider where the children are coming from within a feeder school framework. Dr. Johnson stated there are 3 high schools in this area and at some point you must prioritize. Tom Marshall stated it is difficult to put an index on value. Mr. Johnson stated each year this problem is not addressed, we get further behind. Dr. Webb stated maintenance costs come out of the operations budget, we prioritize and maintenance is the first thing to go.
3. White Station High School Renovation: There was discussion regarding the costs for this project. Mr. Marshall reminded the NAC land costs are higher in East Memphis. Chairman Fleming stated replacement cost for

this project would not be cost effective due to the value of land costs. Mr. Marshall stated costs are in future dollars based on the latest figures from the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

**VI. Discussion of Next Steps:**

- A. MCS and SCS were asked to e-mail the additional information requested from NAC to Chairman Fleming as soon as possible. This will assist NAC Members in reviewing the requests and help move the process forward.
- B. Vice-Chairman Cato Johnson reminded the school personnel of the February 1, 2005 deadline for NAC recommendations.

**VII. Next meeting date is Tuesday, December 21, 2004 at 8:30 a.m. in the Mayor's Large Conference Room, 160 North Main Street, Suite 850.**

Commissioner Lillard made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Chairman Fleming adjourned the meeting at 4:35 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

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Nisha Powers  
Secretary

Date